

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 CPR-01 /071 W
----- 119653

R 150920Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6180

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

USLO PEKING

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SINGAPORE 4308

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, SN, CH

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION TO DEATH OF MAO TSE-TUNG

SUMMARY: MAO'S DEATH RECEIVED WIDE PRESS COVERAGE, BUT BOTH PRESS AND PUBLIC REACTION WAS LESS THAN THAT EXPRESSED AT DEATH OF CHOU EN-LAI. EDITORIAL COMMENT GENERALLY MORE CONCERNED WITH CHINA AFTER MAO THAN WITH MAO. PLAY IN CHINESE PRESS NOTICEABLY RESTRAINED. END SUMMARY.

1. MAO'S DEATH RECEIVED WIDE COVERAGE IN THE SINGAPORE PRESS AND ON GOVERNMENT-OWNED RADIO/TV. IN ADDITION TO REPORTS FROM PEKING, THERE WERE LONG-PREPARED OBITUARIES REVIEWING THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE CHAIRMAN. THE DAILY FUNERAL DEVELOPMENTS CONTINUE TO BE FRONT PAGE STORIES, SUPPLEMENTED WITH NUMEROUS ARTICLES SPECULATING ON CHINA'S FUTURE LEADERSHIP AND FOREIGN POLICY. ALL ARE BASED ON FOREIGN WIRE AND FEATURE SERVICES, WITH LOCAL EFFORTS LIMITED TO AN EDITORIAL IN EACH OF THE MAJOR DAILIES. COVERAGE OF MAO'S DEATH IN THE CHINESE PRESS IS NOTICEABLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MORE RESTRAINED THAN IN THE ENGLISH PRESS, POSSIBLY

REFLECTING GOS CONCERN ABOUT ATTITUDES OF CHINESE POPULACE, EDITORIAL CAUTION, OR BOTH.

2. THE STRIKING FEATURE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC REACTION TO MAO'S DEATH IS THAT IT IS LESS EXTENSIVE AND MORE SUBDUED THAN TO DEATH OF CHOU EN-LAI. THERE ARE FEWER WREATHS AT THE MEMORIAL HALL SET UP AT THE BANK OF CHINA AND FAR FEWER MOURNERS PAYING THEIR RESPECTS THAN AT SIMILAR SERVICES FOR CHOU. IN CONVERSATIONS EMBASSY OFFICERS HAD WITH CHINESE SINGAPOREANS ABOUT THE FEWER EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF, THEY SAID THEY FELT CHOU HAD DONE MORE FOR CHINA, BUT WERE UNABLE TO FURTHER EXPLAIN THEIR REACTION. IT MAY BE THAT THE VERY PRACTICAL, NON-IDEOLOGICAL SINGAPORE CHINESE IDENTIFIED MORE WITH CHOU AND HISTORIC CHINA THAN WITH MAO AND MAOISM. IT IS OF NOTE THAT ALL EDITORIAL WRITERS COMMENTING ON CHINA'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND MAO'S LEADERSHIP LINKED BOTH TO THE ABILITIES OF CHOU.

3. SOME, MOSTLY WESTERN RESIDENTS, HAVE SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS GOS, SURPRISED BY THE DEPTH OF THE REACTION TO CHOU'S DEATH, PUT THE WORD OUT TO VARIOUS CHINESE GROUPS TO KEEP THEIR EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY TO A MINIMUM. HOWEVER, THIS IS PURE SPECULATION ON THEIR PART, AND THE EMBASSY HAS NO CONFIRMATION THAT GOS HAD THESE STEPS.

4. THE GOS CONDOLENCE MESSAGE WAS SENT FROM PM LEE KUAN YEW TO PREMIER HUA KUO-FENG. FOLLOWING IS TEXT: ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SINGAPORE, I EXTEND MY DEEP SYMPATHY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON THE DEATH OF CHAIRMAN MAO TSE-TUNG. HE WAS ONE OF THE GIANTS OF THIS CENTURY. HE TRANSFORMED CHINA AND THEREBY CHANGED THE COURSE OF EVENTS IN ASIA AND THE WORLD. HIS PASSING IS A GREAT LOSS TO THE PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT OF CHINA. END TEXT. EMBASSY STRUCK BY FORMALITY OF NOTE AND THE EXCLUSION OF "ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE." GOS MAY HAVE WANTED TO EMPHASIZE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT ANY AND ALL RELATIONS WITH PRC ARE ON A GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT BASIS AND AVOID ANY HINT OF IDENTIFICATION OF ITS ETHNIC CHINESE WITH CHINA.

5. COMMENT ON MAO'S PASSING WAS LED OFF BY THE STRAITS TIMES ON SEPTEMBER 10. THE EXPATRIATE BRITISH EDITORIAL WRITER FOR THE STRAITS TIMES OBSERVED THAT "MAO HIMSELF MADE IT (THE POST REV

OLUTIONARY PRIOD)

HARDER THAN IT NEEDED TO BE." WHILE APPRECIATIVE OF MAO'S GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS, HE POINTED OUT THAT "MAO THE BUILDER WAS CONTINUALLY IN CONTRADICTION WITH MAO THE REVOLUTIONARY. STABILITY AND PROGRESS, HE KNEW, COULD RESULT IN COMPLACENCY, A FALLING BACK INTO THE OLD WAYS... SO IN SEARCH OF A GUARANTEE FOR POLITICAL RECTITUDE HE LAUNCHED HIS CAMPAIGNS...THESE SUDDEN UPSURGES, BETWEEN PERIODS OF ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT, BROUGHT CHINA TO THE EDGE OF CHAOS, UNDOING MANY SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL ACHIEVEMENTS, BUT FOR MAO THESE WERE COMPENSATED FOR IN THE SPREAD OF REVOLUTIONARY FERVOUR AMONG THE YOUNG AND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THOSE...WHO DID NOT SHARE HIS VISION OF THE SOCIALIST MAN...HE DID NOT SOLVE THE CONTRADICTIONS OF HIS DREAM, BUT HE HAS BEQUATHED TO 800 MILLION PEOPLE THE NEW MODERN CHINA, ONE LARGELY OF HIS OWN MAKING."

6. THE NEW NATION (AFTERNOON TABLOID OF STAITs TIMES GROUP), IN EDITORIAL MORE LIKELY WRITTEN BY A SINGAPOREN, EMPHASIZED THAT ALONG WITH EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL RESPECT HIS LEGACY INCLUDED "ONE OF THE MOST TIGHTLY CONTROLLED SOCIETIES IN THE WORLD. THE MAOIST SYSTEM BROOKS NO INDIVIDUALISM, AND ROUNDLY CONDEMNS ANY FORM OF REVISIONISM... TO WHAT EXTENT HIS IDEOLOGICAL LEGACY WILL ENDURE WILL DEPEND ON HOW HIS SUCCESSORS SEE ITS RELEVANCE TO CHINA THAT MUST ENTER ANOTHER STAGE OF MODERNIZATION. MAO'S DEATH MAY LEAD TO A FASTER RATE OF DEVELOPMENT IF THERE IS A SMOOTH TRANSITION FROM HARDLINE IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT TO A MORE PRACTICAL APPROACH. BUT SUCCESSION IS IN DOUBT, AND CONFLICT IS LIKELY TO ARISE BETWEEN RADICALS AND MODERATES ON HOW HIS THOUGHTS SHOULD BE TRANSLATED INTO POLICY..."

7. COMMENTARY IN THE CHINESE PRESS CAME A DAY LATER, PERHAPS AFTER CONSULTATION/REVIEW WITH APPROPRIATE GOS OFFICIALS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS IS THEIR STYLE, THE CHINESE EDITORIAL WRITERS SPEAK MORE OBLIQUELY AND RAISE MORE QUESTIONS THAN THEY ANSWER. NAN YANG SIANG PAU AND SIN CHEW JIT POH AGREED THAT MAO WAS ONE OF THE GREAT LEADERS OF THIS CENTURY AND THAT WITH HIS DEATH, CHINA MOVES INTO A NEW ERA. NAN YANG SEES THAT WITH HUA KUO-FENG AT THE HELM "THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT MAY ATTACH MORE IMPORTANCE TO ECONOMIC CONSTRUCTION...AND LESS ATTENTION TO MAO'S DICTUM OF 'POLITICS IN COMMAND.' IF THIS IS THE CASE, CHINA'S RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., JAPAN AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE AREA WILL IMPROVE AND EVEN THE TENSION BETWEEN HER AND THE SOVIET UNION MAY LESSEN...FURTHERMORE IT WAS MAO WHO CONVERTED MARXISM-LENINISM FROM AN EUROPEAN IDEOLOGY TO AN ASIAN IDEOLOGY, AND HIS DEATH WILL CERTAINLY HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON THE COMMUNIST PARTIES IN ASIA."

8. SIN CHEW WROTE THAT "THE WORLD SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE RADICALS AND MODERATES AND WHICH GROUP WILL RULE CHINA. TODAY, THIS PART OF THE WORLD WE LIVE IN--SOUTHEAST ASIA--IS STILL A REGION IN WHICH THE SUPER POWERS AND BIGGER COUNTRIES HAVE SHOWN GREAT INTEREST. CHINA IS, OF COURSE, AMONG THESE POWERS. THEREFORE, COUNTRIES IN THIS REGION SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO SUCH QUESTIONS KS WHAT SORT OF LEADERSHIP WILL EMERGE; WHA LINE WILL CHINA TAKE; WILL CHINA KEEP ITS WORD TO NOT EXPORT REVOLUTION NOR INTERVENE IN OTHER COUNTRIES' DOMESTIC AFFAIRS; WILL IT RESPECT OTHER NATIONS' SOVEREIGNTY?"

9. EMBASSY HAS NOT RECEIVED INVITATION TO SIGN CONDOLENCE BOOK AT BANK OF CHINA AND HAS NOT DONE SO. FURTHERMORE, THERE ARE NO REPORTS THAT GOS OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN INVITED OR HAVE SIGNED THE BOOK.
GRANT

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Message Attributes

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